

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC



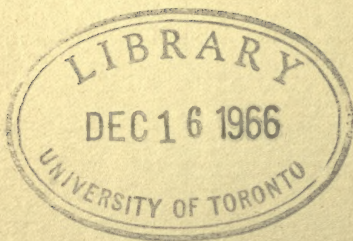
"My Love, My Queen."

Photo by Martin Jacobette.

POEMS
LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC
BY
J. BARNARD-JAMES

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MY LOVE, MY QUEEN

As when the morn breaks o'er the darkling
hills,
Dispelling the grey mists of brooding night ;
As when its rosy glow my bosom thrills
With keen delight :
Such is my Love, my Queen.

As when the Sun, kissing the early dew—
The tears black Night has wrung from Nature's
eyes—
Glistens, and flashes every rainbow hue
In gladsome wise :
Such is my Love, my Queen.

As when a Fountain leaps toward the Sun,
And laughs and dances, hovers in mid-air,
Then, rippling sea-ward, bubbles e'er with
fun,
Discarding care :
Such is my Love, my Queen.

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As when an Angel, stepping down from Heaven,
Brings comfort to the bruised and weary heart ;
As when sweet Music steals o'er souls, grief-
riven,

Peace to impart :
Such is my Love, my Queen.

And when a staunch, a true, devoted Friend
Is what my heart craves most, to soothe my pain,
Then to my Love my way I quickly wend ;
And not in vain
I seek my Pearl, my Queen.

Marylands Road,
Maida Vale.
Jan. 1901.

I LIVE NOT, SAVE WITH THEE

O SWEET Marquise, whose eyes one starry
night

First flashed upon my view their meteor-light,
I would not, an I could, be free the spell
Whose power, unwaning, guides my destiny !
Transcending space, with thee my Soul doth
dwell,

I live not, save with thee.

Careless of life, I reckon not what befalls
When Fate to some emprise of peril calls,
If what imports *me* is alone at stake.
But life's more precious now it's vowed to thee ;
In exile though I rove for thy dear sake,

I live not, save with thee.

Last year, the rocky heights of Corsica,
Bathed in the noonday sun, I viewed afar.
Haunts of romance, how could ye fail to move
The subtle fountain whence springs poetry ?
But song requires the stimulus of love :

I sing not, save of thee.

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Anon 'mid Delphic fanes my steps I lose,
Then stand where Byron's heart now finds
repose.

The oracle is mute, the heart is still ;
Parnassus, frowning, heeded not my plea,
And Missolonghi failed my soul to fill :
I live not, save with thee.

Thence to the City of the Golden Horn
I turned my face, again with anguish worn.
The Bosphorus, begemmed with sapphire hues,
Brought scanty solace to my misery :
How should its Houris' glances rouse my muse ?
I sing not, save of thee.

Later, in Moorish lands I wandered wide,
And, desert-bound, proud Kairwan's mosques
espied.

Unmoved to song, I passed amid the sights,
The turbaned throngs and Souks of Tripoli,
Such as were fabled in the Thousand Nights :
My heart was still with thee.

And now, when climbing in this Styrian Wald,
The huntsman softly signals for a halt—
A glorious panorama spread beneath—
My heart ne'er wavers in its constancy.
I think of thee with every bating breath,
I live not, save with thee.

I LIVE NOT, SAVE WITH THEE 5

How well with thee should I enjoy to roam
Among these tree-clad hills, the roe-buck's
home !

How sweet, with thee, to inhale the pine-wood's
scent,

And watch the squirrel dart from tree to tree !
Apart from thee, my soul knows no content,
I live not, save with thee.

When now the west'ring sun begins to fade,
The roe-buck leaves his solitary shade,
And hies to juicy meadows where his mate
With piping summons calls him plaintively :
And yet four moons must pass while still I wait,
I wait and long for thee.

This exile ended, may I by thy side
The after-days of life with thee abide !
With thee sweet peace and consolation are ;
With thee, a simple cottage by the sea
Than palaces abroad were better far :
I live not, save with thee.

Schlöss Pfannberg, Styria.
June, 1909.

BEAUTY, BE MY FRIEND

I CRAVE thy friendship, sweetest dame ;
 For more I may not ask.
 True friendship is a stalwart claim
 And grants the knightly task
 The lady's safety to defend :
 O Beauty, be my friend !

'Tis not the radiance of thine eyes
 In which love's lustres dwell,
 That makes me most of all things prize
 The right to serve thee well.
 But, dainty lady, condescend :
 O Beauty, be my friend !

'Tis not the Sun-kissed coral hues
 That in thy cheeks find place ;
 Nor yet thy smile, though that endues
 Those eyes with lovelier grace,
 That make me beg thee to extend
 The status of a friend.

Such charms as these my heart would move
To deeper passions far,
Were friendship not akin to love—
Love's heaven ; a friend's a star—
To love I never may pretend,
So, Beauty, be my friend.

My guiding star, in me inspire
The chivalry of youth,
And spur ambition's waning fire ;
Dub me thy knight in truth.
To higher goals my way I wend
If Beauty be my friend.

For though thy light and grace enthrall
Such hearts as may be free,
And, music-sweet, thy voice may call
In syren-notes to me,
'Tis grace of mind and soul that blend
To make a perfect friend.

Thy mind is like some precious book
With gems of wisdom stored ;
And when within thy soul I look
I find a golden hoard :
A man may e'en to heaven ascend,
If Beauty be his friend.

Quisisana, Wiesbaden.
Jan. 1908.

WHEN SUNSHINE TURNS TO NIGHT

'Spretæ Injuria Formæ.'

VERGIL, *Georgics*, IV.

THE Sun shines !

There is joy in the woods, O my Heart !
The oak-leaves are crisp and the snow shimmers
brightly.

Be gay, my Belovèd, be gay, and apart
From the crowd let us wander where Love
hovers lightly.

The Sun shines !

And the tree-tops are gilt with his glory,
The face of grim Winter is dimpled with
laughter ;
Tiny firs would grow tall like their brothers
more hoary,
And push high their crests : 'tis the Sun they
are after.

The Sun shines !

All around us the white hills are smiling,
And envious valleys alone brood in mist.
So walk, my Belovèd, with me—all beguiling
The moment with love-charms I cannot resist.

WHEN SUNSHINE TURNS TO NIGHT 9

The Sun shines !

O my Heart, where thou art, there is Beauty !
Of thy voice tender echoes resound through the
dales,
Sympathetic, caressing, well-knowing the duty
That rendering music in echoes entails.

The Sun shines !

Thou art here by my side, fairest Lady !
Thou art gay ?—All is gay : at thy smile Nature
smiles.
Then Winter is Summer, all bosky and gladey,
And flowers appear in response to thy wiles.

.

The Sun sinks !

Thou art frowning. O Nature's Beguiler,
Already the flowers lie dead at my feet !
For I, all despondent, become the reviler
Of eyes full of magic, of beauty complete.

The Sun dips !

The horizon is painted with roses,
But blackness looms up from the nethermost
sky ;
Like a pall it spreads over, and threat'ning
encloses
The hills and the woods.—O my Heart, let
me die !

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The Sun's set !

Ere he went, he cast dagger-like flashes
Which pierced for a moment the on-creeping
gloom.—

She is gone ! And I mourn in sackcloth and
ashes

The words that provoked such a terrible doom.

All is Night !

Underfoot I no longer see oak-leaves :
I grope in the darkness ; no star in the sky—
As a symbol of friendship, a help 'gainst the
foe—cleaves

The enveloping mist with encouraging eye.

All is Night !

And my visions of sweet consolation,
With Beauty my friend, have been quickly
dispelled ;
And greater—far greater—my heart's desolation
Than if in that Heaven I never had dwelled.

Luisirana, Wiesbaden

Jan. 1908.

THE GHOST IN MY LADY'S BOWER

COME, ruffle your hair,
Ye maidens fair,
And turn down the light and stir up the fire :
Draw closer around, and hark, if ye dare,
To a direful tale of flicker and flare,
Of phantoms in light attire.

The moon shone bright
One Christmas night
At the ominous ghostly hour,
On a reckless pair,
Who dared to be where
The ghouls and sprites have power.
A castle old,
To demons sold,
As the price of a deadly crime,
Frowned terribly grim
With shadows dim
On a spectral pantomime.
The fairies dance
And goblins prance
On the mossy moonlit sward ;

The hinges crack
 As the doors swing back :
 What use is lock or ward ?
 There 's a tee-to-tum,
 And a fee-fo-fum,
 And an owl in the ivy tower :
 A lullaby,
 And an infant's cry,
 And a ghost in My Lady's Bower.

The reckless pair—
 One, a lady fair ;
 The other a gallant gay—
 Terrified stand,
 Hand in hand,
 And fain would go their way.
 But the demon's spell,
 From the midnight bell
 Till the first dim rays of dawn,
 Will hold them bound
 On enchanted ground
 To see the graveyards yawn.

The castle chapel 's a weird old place,
 Half-sunk in long decay.
 It holds the bones of a once-proud race,
 Whose bodies have rotted away.

THE GHOST IN MY LADY'S BOWER 13

The roof is off; there are holes in the
wall,
Which the bats have made their nest ;
The altar is under the Devil's thrall,
And the dead men have no rest.
The coffins are gaping wide to-night,
The death-bonds loose their hold ;
And spectres rise in the blue moonlight
In the forms they had of old.
The spellbound pair with horrible fear
Behold the scene but all too clear.

Lo ! Before their eyes
Thin pictures rise,
Which unravel the tangled tale :
Show a dainty dame
Who is brought to shame
By a noble knight of exalted name :
Alas, for my Lady frail !

There's a bleeding heart
As two lovers part,
And a wail of deep despair ;
An embrace, a sigh,
A vow and a lie,
Then a maid forlorn and fain to die :
But the knight makes love elsewhere.

There 's a parent wroth,
 And a fearful oath,
 And a life nipped in the flower ;
 There 's a gleam of blood,
 And a crimson flood,
 And a weighted corse in the slimy mud
 In the moat at the foot of the tower.

There 's a miser old
 Telling his gold :
 Naught else to love hath he.
 There 's a terrible dread,
 As the metal red
 Reflects the hue that sullied the dead ;
 And the miser turns to flee.

But the goblins prance,
 And elfins dance ;
 There 's an owl in the ivy tower.
 There 's a lullaby,
 And an infant's cry,
 And a mother weeping, weeping nigh :
 'Tis the Ghost in My Lady's Bower.

There 's a tee-to-tum,
 And a fee-fo-fum,
 And a whiff of a sulphurous flame.
 There 's the crack of doom,
 And a fearful boom,

THE GHOST IN MY LADY'S BOWER 15

As the sunrise peeps through the ghastly gloom,
And puts foul Night to shame.

There's a trembling pair
Who dared to be where
The ghouls and sprites have sway.
In the morning light
They lose the fright,
That held them bound through the awesome
night,
But they're glad to go their way.

Wandsworth Common.

Dec. 1894.

MENDACIA OMNIA

A CYNIC'S LAMENT

My soul was a-thirsting, a-thirsting, a-thirst-
ing,

My soul was a-thirsting for a draught of
limpid Truth.

I found a sparkling fountain

On Virtue's hard-won mountain :

But the greedy sunshine drank it, and bequeathed
me nought but ruth.

I saw a bubble, a rainbow-painted bubble,

I saw a bubble afloat in the air.

When at first discovered,

Near my grasp it hovered :

I stretched my hand toward it, but it laughing
danced elsewhere.

I went in trouble for that fairy, dancing
bubble,

I went in trouble throughout the summer
day.

Now it gleamed with colour,
Now, in shade, 'twas duller ;
But when I thought to hold it, lo ! it vanished
all away.

I went a-wooing, in quest of Truth pursuing,
I went a-wooing a maid with saffron hair.
Her eyes shone soft as morning,
Sweet smiles her lips adorning ;
To win her love, who would not death—or e'en
dishonour—dare ?

I wooed her favour, her favour, her favour,
I wooed the favour of this maid of charms so
rare.
But when I would embrace her,
And my arms would fain enlace her,
I found a yielding phantom, thin as air, thin as
air.

I go a-mourning, a-mourning, a-mourning,
I go a-mourning, for Truth does not exist :
For now a sparkling fountain
On Virtue's treach'rous mountain,
The sunshine makes its waters turn to vague,
deceptive mist ;
And now an airy bubble
Evading all my trouble,

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It flashes ever-changing hues of colour, sun-
shine-kissed ;

And now a phantom maiden

With fleeting beauty laden,

Intangible, she vanishes, and fills my heart
with trist :

So I go a-mourning, a-mourning, a-mourning,

I go a-mourning, for Truth does not exist.

King St. Covent Garden.
Feb. 1896.

MY MISTRESS IS A DAMSEL FAIR

A SONG

My Mistress is a damsel fair,
A thousand Graces deck her hair ;
At times she smiles on me.
But when, emboldened by the sight,
I seek a kiss, she takes to flight.—
Oh, why is Love so coy a Sprite,
So void of Constancy?

Her sparkling eyes, twin-stars of Love,
My inmost soul with longing move.
O Sweetheart, smile on me !
A rose-red mouth adorns her face,
Her bosom's soft round lines I trace
And, tracing, almost must embrace
The scarce-veiled Fantasy.

Addiscombe, Croydon.

Jan. 1897.

LA PENSÉE

IN quest of the beautiful, blithesome, and gay,
I wandered o'er hill-tops and dales,
Inhaling the scents of the fresh summer day,
That followed a night of rough gales.

The sun's golden orb was uprising apace,
And Nature renewed the sweet song
That during the tempest had e'en given place
To discords too harsh to prolong.

A green, mossy carpet, invitingly spread
A couch for my languorous limbs ;
And, charmed with the world and a primitive
bed,
I reposed in a realm of vague whims.

Soon, lulled by the breath of the flowery breeze,
And the splash of the brooklet behind,
By the song of the birds and the buzz of the
bees,
My senses in sleep were confined.

A pillow of moss and a curtain of fern,
A blanket of sunshiny rays ;
All blue overhead, save where cloud-billows
turn
The glint of the Sun's fiery blaze.

How long I reclined in oblivious bliss,
And to dreams all ambitions resigned,
I know not ; but one thing I know,—it is
this :
That a vision appeared to my mind.

A vision of beauty, a phantom of love,
A fairy's celestial grace ;
A white-vestured angel sent down from above
To bless this terrestrial place.

Rubbing my eyes I saw more clear
That 'twas no phantom that was near,
But hard reality in loveliest guise
That human nature can devise :
A maiden fair
With golden hair,
Beneath a rugged cedar tree,
Whose blackened arms
With her sweet charms
Joined grandeur to simplicity.

The vision entranced my awakening soul,
 And fearing to break such a spell,
 I feigned to sleep still ; but in playing that rôle,
 I ween that I played it not well.

For a smile flitting over her honey-sweet lips,
 And the mirth in her love-laughing eye
 Betray that no cunning her genius trips :
 She discovers the ambush so sly.

But slyer, more cunning is she :
 For, hiding her shrewd penetration,
 She lightly advances to me,
 Held fast in profound veneration.

Then the Fair One bends over my form ;
 I strive to renew the deception ;
 Calm features conceal my mind's storm,
 As I endeavour to cheat her perception.

With eyes shut fast and rigid limbs—
 (Love's pent-up fever all belying—)
 My swelling heart well-nigh o'erbrims
 With such heroic self-denying.

For near my cheeks her golden hair
 Vies with the summer sunshine's glory ;
 And, hov'ring o'er, her lips so rare
 Tempt me repeat love's sweetest story.

Upon this beauteous maiden's breast
A pansy had its place of rest,—
 A place for envy !
She plucked it from that resting-place,
And kissed its velvet petals thrice,
Then dropped on my sleep-feigning face
This violet flower of countless price—
 Delicious frenzy !

‘ *Pensez à moi !* ’ she cried, ‘ O think of me,
In dreamland's vale,—where'er thy mind may
 be.

Waking, remain my slave ; held by this spell,
May constant love within thy bosom swell.’

As if afraid to wake me,
Then lightly back she springs.
My firm resolves forsake me ;
One bound beside her brings
The lover whom she pleases
At times to grant his way,
But scarce with kiss appeases
When holding her own sway.

‘ *Penser à toi !* ’ I cried, ‘ O dearest love,
What else in this fair earth or heaven above
Save thee, with whom my very life is fraught—
Could occupy my mind, my every thought ?

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'And now, sweet goddess of my day-dreams,
list :

I vow this priceless pansy thou hast kist
Upon my bosom ever shall repose,
Till death my eyelids and my life shall close ;
And may this flower an emblem be
Of my eternal constancy !'

With a silvery laugh and a shake of the head,
She eludes my encircling embrace.
Refusing her lips to her lover, instead
She goes tripping away from the place.

And into a thicket of woodbine she dives ;
Then quickly I start to give chase.
Through the foliage sweet the pursued one
contrives
To pass without leaving a trace.

I searched every cranny and nook ;
No sign remained of this creature,
Coquettishly seeking to brook -
My ardent endeavours to reach her.

But e'en as I looked in one bower,
Where hawthorn and woodbine together
Made an arbour of green leaf and flower,
I encountered a spell of fine weather :

There, sitting on a bank of moss,
Her golden hair one tangled toss,
A honeysuckle spray she twined
With which her tresses fair to bind.
And, unconscious a heart-stricken watcher
was nigh,
She sat at her ease, nor attempted to fly.

I bounded forward, grasped her hand,
Before she knew me present ;
With a startled tremor, quite unplanned,
She deigned a smile most pleasant,
And looking in my face
With sweet angelic grace,
Those hazel-eyes of lustrous hue
My love-smit heart pierce through and
through.

Her gaze soon wanders to my breast,
Where her dear pansy lies at rest ;
And, as she looks, her lips repeat
My heedless words with love replete,
That in a moment's ecstasy
Prepared a dire perplexity :
' And shall that flower an emblem be
Of your eternal constancy ? '

I followed with my eyes her gaze,
And with distress and e'en amaze

Saw the flower she 'd so recently given
 Was already quite faded and riven ;
 That on my breast
 The flimsy guest—
 Proclaimed so rashly as a test—
 Accused my sincerity
 Of lacking in verity.
 And then again my Fair One spoke
 In bantering terms, half-earnest joke :

‘ O fickle heart, O fatal love !
 And is it thus thy faith will prove ?
 Thy changing humour in one face
 Will find true beauty, and will trace
 Sweet signs of grace.
 But when the freshness of the charm is past,
 Thy admiration will not last !

‘ O perjured heart ! O deep deception !
 What fragile, fanciful conception !
 A withered flower, a faded love,
 A fond heart's sacrificial dove,
 Man's soul unmove.
 And well they may not, for this test, forsooth,
 Proclaims it void of steadfast truth.’

Though jestingly the words were spoken,
 And though she thought my vows ne'er
 broken,

Better I knew my changeful heart
 And with an inward, sad misgiving
 Confessed apart
 That oft my fancies proved unliving.
 And a sense of regret came into my mind,
 An overwhelming depression :
 For I feared lest for her my gaze should be blind,
 And dead love thus become my trans-
 gression.

But e'en while I mused, the bright angel was
 gone,
 With her prattle, gay smiles, merry
 laughter ;
 And though, when she came, the sun steadily
 shone,
 When she went, all my light followed after :

The light of my life, and the joy of my heart,
 My faith, and my noblest conviction ;
 For I learnt in the World that *her* smiles were
 all art,
 As false as the pansy's prediction.

Brussels.

~~Aug. 1888.~~
 Sept. 1888.

IN DREAMLAND DELL

RECLINING at ease
 In the warm summer breeze,
 Rejoicing in Nature's display,
 I scan her bright hills
 And her beautiful rills,
 And bless this luxuriant day.

All in harmony blends,
 When my reverie ends
 By a musical, light-tripping sound ;
 And a rustle I hear
 Approaching more near :
 My heart with delight makes a bound.

I wonderstruck gaze
 With my mind in amaze
 On a dimpling, angelical face ;
 A goddess-like form,
 Though humanly warm,
 The personification of grace.

The bright, golden sun,
That is rivalled by none
Finds reflection here in her hair ;
Her cherry-red lips
The flowers eclipse,
And the fragrance that Nature puts there.

Unwaiting for a second glance
From eyes like orbs where sunbeams dance,
Fevered with love at sight
I strain each muscle tight,
And curb unbounded passion
After some clumsy fashion.
Then from my emerald bed I spring,
Enrapt by joy to hear her sing
With voice like nightingale
With linnet's note :
The sounds o'er hill and dale
Like zephyrs float.

A second glance at length she too bestowed :
The first she'd checked from maiden coyness.
And then a damask-rose took its abode
Within her cheek. A certain toyness
Sparkled in her bright eye ;
She curtsied low, while I
Bashful and sheepish, overcome with love,
Awkwardly bowed : my limbs would hardly
move.

With female tact she quickly knew
 That mine was heart designed to woo
 Such wondrous beauty.
 So gaily tripping on before,
 She led the way ; I followed after,
 And, as we went, loved more and more
 The Fair, who did with merry laughter
 A hostess' duty.

‘Welcome to Dreamland Dell,’ she
 cried,
 As in a glade close at her side
 I stood prepared to enter where
 Abode this damsel sweet and fair.
 A wondrous bower
 Of leaf and flower
 Where filtered sunbeams softly steal ;
 A mossy grove
 Tempting sweet love,
 Combine my passion to reveal.
 Her dancing eyes and pearly teeth,
 Her laughing mouth and fragrant breath,
 Her lissome form soft gauze beneath
 Bid me to dare or life or death.
 My arm slips round her slender waist,
 I feel the heaving of her breast,
 The passion of her lips I taste,
 And madly seek to quaff the rest.

How quickly time elapses in such bliss !
And never long can last such dreams as this !
 When happiness is at its height,
 As surely then there comes its blight.
Just when in fullest rapture I
Am drinking love's sweet fantasy,
My Dreamland charmer fades away
And dissipates in misty grey ;
Collapses too the verdant bed
Whereon our love was all but wed.
Down in a dark and loathsome pit,
 By sunshine's rays unlit,
 I fall, and fall, and fall
Till, lo ! a sigh bursts from my breast,
Which breaks at once my nightly rest.
I rub my eyes ; the golden morning sun
Pours through my lattice, tells the day's
 begun.

Wellingborough.
Aug. 1885.

THE DETHRONEMENT OF VENUS

OR

THE TRIUMPH OF HUMAN BEAUTY

Jupiter tonat. All vast Hell resounds,
 And proud Olympus' utter parts awake.
 The blacksmith Cyclops at their Aetna forge,
 Disturbed, stand still, forgetting Vulcan's work,
 And let red sparks that from their anvil flew,
 Grow black and dull and cold, from sheer
 amaze.

The summons quickly spread to earth and
 heaven :

'Great Jove his court will hold ; come gods and
 men,

Assemble all unto his judgment throne.'

Then from the depths of Tartarus the shades

Came hurrying fast in answer to his beck :

Ixion left his wheel, Sisyphus his stone,

Tantalus the juicy grapes and flowing stream,

While barking Cerberus made way for all.

The brawny Cyclops hurried with the rest,

And elbowed past fair nymphs and gods
 gallant ;

But Neptune, with his trident, bowing low,
 Made way for stately Pallas and her maids.
 So all were mingled, pressing to the front :
 Men jostled gods, and both strove hard to gain
 A vantage-ground near to the Great God's
 throne.

While on Olympus' top, in robes of state,
 Surrounded by lesser divinities,
 Great Jove reclines with Juno at his side.
 But hush ! the monarch rises ; all is still,
 And breathless all await his sov'reign voice.
 Then, looking down on Venus at his feet,
 He speaks, with mien majestic, godlike, sad :

(JUPITER)

'Venus, thy beauty long beguiled our sight,
 And loath we are to hear thy name impugned ;
 But evidence presumptive darks thy fame.
 This charge before us calls thee false, untrue ;
 Unchaste, and loving many men and gods,
 Unmindful of thy husband, Vulcan's, claims.
 Fain would we think thee innocent, and blot
 The accusation from all memory ;
 Glad wipe the starting tear from out our eye,
 And always think of thee as chaste and pure.
 Fond did we on thy cheek imprint a kiss,
 And circle thy slim waist with our right arm ;
 But then we thought thy grace was genuine,

34 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

That one alone possessed thy true regard,
 And hence bestowed our own paternal love.
 So hear the story of the weighty charge
 Against thee brought on evidence so great
 That all thy charms will be of no avail,
 If, in defence, thou, guilty, fail to prove
 The charge unfounded and thy nature pure.

‘But if thou prove thee innocent, that thou
 Hast loved one god, no man nor god but he,
 We then will crave thy pardon, ask thy grace,
 Restore thee gladly to thy former place ;
 Then Heaven shall ring with laughter blithe
 and gay,
 And music in the heavenly air shall play.
 So, Hermes, rise ; thy charge and story tell :
 Prove Venus true, or toll her virtue’s knell.’

(HERMES)

‘O Mighty Ruler of the Heavenly Bounds,
 Controller of the Destiny of Earth ;
 O King of Gods and Emperor of Men,
 I, weeping, bring this charge, and fain would
 see,
 Not Venus’ guilt, but innocence proclaimed.

‘The Earth brought forth, among her many
 throes,

The offspring of a Lily and a Rose :
 A maiden blest with Nature's fairest gifts.
 But yet she lacked that one that most uplifts
 The bearer, makes her form possess
 Attractions such as lie not in mere dress.
 Venus, descending lightly from above,
 Cast round her face the spell of ardent love ;
 So made her erst-charms fairer, bearing grace
 That none but Venus plants around a face.'—

(JUPITER)

'Stay, Hermes, wait a moment.' Great Jove
 spoke,
 While buzzing interest the heavens' air broke.
 'Bring here the Lily's offspring ; here must be
 These charms so manifold, so fair to see.'
 Quick as a flash the god's word is obeyed,
 Straightway before him stands the lovely maid ;
 Then wond'ring shouts of acclamation rise,
 As in delighted rapture Great Jove cries :

(JUPITER)

'O beauteous maid, come forward to our
 throne,
 Ere from thy form the spell of love be flown.
 Thy cheek is mantled with sweet virgin bloom,
 And Fate has mirrored there a happy doom.

36 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

The brilliant damask rose set in thy face
In alabaster skin finds twice-told grace.
Well may he glow with pleasure, honest pride,
Who rings thy taper finger, calls thee 'bride.'
Thrice blest art thou, well mayst a rival be
Of earth's inmates or Heaven's progeny.

'But now, God Hermes, e'en resume thy tale,
And let well-chosen words throughout prevail.
Address this maiden, so that she may know
Where her vast charms have caused another's
 woe.'

The God of Eloquence inclined his head,
And, turning to the damsel, thus he said :

(HERMES)

'When Venus kissed thee, young, she little
 knew
That soon in vain the act she would so rue,
But fancied to herself she had arrayed
A happy graft of graces in one maid.
So Cupid shot his darts from at thy side,
To wound men's hearts : yet did not homicide,
For, lo ! they all stand petrified and dazed
When once they see these charms by Venus
 raised ;
Then fall in admiration at thy feet,
Pay due respect, and worship as is meet.

THE DETHRONEMENT OF VENUS 37

‘ But Venus—jealous that her kiss had lent
Such potent charms—down-hast’ning Paris
sent,

To tell young Cupid he must now desist
Or else his mother’s power will turn to mist.
But impish Cupid, seeing Paris come,
Shoots yet a dart, so wounds and strikes him
dumb.

Entranced he falls and worships at thy feet,
Forgets his message, love-vows to repeat.

‘ Harpocrates, the Silent, next is sent
To serve his mistress, Venus’, fixed intent.
In silence he must beckon to her son,
And make him understand the game is done.
But in thy mighty presence—lo ! he speaks,
And breaks his vow,—discloses Venus’ freaks :
Discloses dire duplicity, and tells
How Venus used love-charms and magic spells.

‘ Venus has loved more gods and men than one :
Yea, more than any else beneath the sun.
And greatly fearing lest King Jove should
know,

One day sent Cupid hurrying down below.
In vain a perfect means to hide her freaks
In every corner of the earth he seeks ;
When, quite despairing, back he flies again,
And finds Harpocrates, persuades in vain :

38 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

The God of Silence sternly shakes his head.
Will not attend to Venus' spoken dread
That all her amours to Jove's ears may come,
Though, at his word, all would thereon be
dumb.

Venus, despairing, walks the heavenly soil,
In anger that one hitch her schemes should
foil,—

When, thought-struck, quick she plucks the
fairest rose

That in the heavenly garden yearly blows.
Impressing on it a sweet, rapturous kiss,
She bids her son to Harpocrates give this ;
Which when he sees, delighted he resigns
His former vow ; in safety she reclines.
No word is made ; to Jove are unknown kept
The loves of Venus, what limits she o'erstept.
Since then Harpocrates has worked her will,
A ready slave ; and would have worked it still,
But when, enamoured, at thy feet he fell,
Was tolled for aye her virtue's funeral knell.
Her jealousy had caused it, and her pride
Received its death-blow when her trust was
tried.'

God Hermes ceases. All attentive wait
The evidence that must corroborate
The charge so gravely made : no idle word
In heaven's Court of Justice may be heard.

At Jove's command Harpocrates disclosed
 How Beauty's amours at his hest reposed
Sub rosa, why no subtle rumour spread
 A sorry story from its tangled thread.
 Hephaestus told how Mars and Venus were
 Caught in his cobweb mesh and prisoned there ;
 And others had, perforce, their tale to spin
 And pile up proof that all confirmed her sin.
 The evidence was clear, so close its weft
 That every hope of its disproof was reft ;
 And Venus, speechless, hung her gold-hued
 head,
 And ne'er a word of refutation said.

A buzzing murmur rose around the throne,—
 Of pleasure from fair goddesses unknown ;
 Regret from gods who fain would see heaven's
 belle
 Unrivalled by a maid in heaven or hell.
 While Juno smiled a calm, satiric smile
 That Venus' charms for once were not in style.
 And Pallas looked in proud, supreme contempt,
 And neither smile nor frown would deign
 attempt.
 Jove from his throne arises, sadly speaks,
 Condemns fair Venus, ere next morning's
 streaks
 O'erspread the eastern sky, to take her flight,
 Find an abode elsewhere, out of his sight.

Thus banished far from that celestial sphere,
She sought a refuge amid mortals here ;
And on this earth reposing, now is laid
Heaven's exiled beauty, its voluptuous maid.
But, taught a lesson by her former kiss,—
In beauty-giving ne'er to be remiss,—
On most she scatters some few, diverse charms,
But never such as brought those great alarms.

Louisa R. Waler.
June, 1885.

REQUIESCAM IN PACE

O ! BURY me not in churchyard gloomy,
 I care no jot for your holy ground.
 Give me a mansion more vast, more roomy,
 Where voices of Nature alone are found.

In a dingle sweet, where soft winds whisper,
 Dig me a grave in the fresh, rich mould ;
 'Neath the swaying trees, where the leaves
 fall crisper,
 Than any in churchyard old.

Let the flowers of Spring a coverlet offer,
 Grown wild, all untrained by human hand ;
 And shut me not in an oaken coffer,
 And wind me never in shroud or band.

For I love far more warm Earth's firm
 pressure,
 Close to my bosom and close to my head :
 And deem sweet mould a cerement fresher
 Than musty rags in a grave-yard bed.

42 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

And let no stone be placed above me :

What need to mark the resting-place ?

My name will live through them that love
me,

If anywhere my deeds find grace.

Wandsworth Common.

Nov. 1895.

THE FOUNTAIN OF REST

I WALK in the Garden of Beauty :

Tread lightly, tread lightly.

The sun does his midsummer duty :

Shines brightly, so brightly.

And blessing the day, I cross the green sward,
The perfume of roses spreads love-scents abroad ;
The iris and poppy, all flowers so gay,
Combine to make merry in innocent play.

The bees' long, monotonous chorus

Spreads forth from the lily,

As they fare on their way so decorous,

Drowsily, drowsily.

And the peace smiling Nature bestows all around
Causes my soul with repose to be crowned ;
The thyme-scented breeze sweet contentment
inspires,
Unmingled with passion or futile desires.

O Nature ! With soul-reaching calm

Thou singest so sweetly,

Intoning one beautiful psalm,

Enthralling completely !

44 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

The ants whisper secrets to coy, nodding
flowers,
While birds make fond love in green leafy
bowers ;
Each blade of young grass seeks to rival the
rest,
And show forth its colours by sunshine caress'd.

Then, won by the fair situation,
I stretch my limbs gladly,
And seek to solve Nature's equation,
Neither madly, nor sadly :
An azure blue canopy arching o'erhead,
And an emerald carpet supplied for my bed,
I find it resolved to the purest and best,
A solace in trouble, a fountain of rest.

Wellingborough
Aug. 1884.

WEISST DU'S NICHT?

WHEN out of Chaos order sprang,
And Heaven to the Earth was wed :
When, as glad nuptial music, rang
The sound of life : it has been said
That Heaven's words were '*Liebst du mich ?*'
While Earth replied, '*Ich liebe dich.*'

When, in the realms of Paradise,
First Adam to his consort spoke
—Whose soft eyes, lit by love's device,
Smiled as his voice the silence broke—
The words he framed were '*Liebst du mich ?*'
Her answer was '*Ich liebe dich.*'

When Romeo to Juliet sang,
And when his lay with smiles was greeted,
The nightly serenade began
With raptured words, so oft repeated :
'*O sag' mir, Liebchen ! Liebst du mich ?*'
She whispered low, '*Ich liebe dich.*'

46 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

When Faust, with Marg'ret on his arm,
 Enjoyed a walk in Martha's garden :
 When Mephistoph'les feigned a charm,
 'Gainst which his heart he could not harden :
 Said Faust and Satan, '*Liebst du mich ?*'
 Each 'she' replied, '*Ich liebe dich.*'

Whene'er a man and maiden sit
 Both with the other's grace enchanted :
 When heart to heart by love is knit,
 And her white hand would *sure* be granted :
 Then he should question, '*Liebst du mich ?*'
 And she should say, '*Ich liebe dich.*'

But if the lady idly speaks,
 Unrecking that she has a hearer,
 And in her random fancy's freaks
 Soft utters words than all else dearer :
 And if she say '*Ich liebe dich,*'
 What must he answer? *Das weiss ich !*

Brussels.

June, 1888.

THE NIGHTMARE

A FRAGMENT FROM 'THE FORSAKEN CITY'

THE night comes on, the darkness falls apace,
When to the couches of our ancestors
We wearily and gladly take our way.
My good companions, travel-stained and worn,
Seek, each by each, repose and sweet content ;
While I, their Prince, rejoicing with the rest,
Recline my limbs upon the regal bed.
My eye-lids close with sleep, and then a blank,
A state of bliss, relieves my o'erwrought brain.

.

Ha ! what is that?—A something past my
eyes
Has flitted, startling me from a deep sleep.
Cold perspiration stands upon my brow,
A strange, dark shadow o'er my heart ;
And, vaguely conscious in the dark-robed night,
I grope to find the phantom of my fears. . . .
—What dreaming fancy this? I calm my mind,
And still perforce the quaking of my limbs.
Then, laughing at myself for fearing thus,
And brave once more, again my couch I seek.

48 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

Once more asleep, again I dreaming lie,
 And once again the past day's scenes revive,
 And visit my beclouded brain with thoughts
 Of monuments to pristine gallantry,
 Traditions writ on memory's dim-lined page ;
 How vice with virtue warred, passion with
 love. . . .

And then, once more, a terror vague and vast,
 Sits on my breast, and makes my breath come
 hard,—

A helpless dread, a fear of some unknown,
 A falling in a deep and dark abyss.

Again I start, as if some unseen shade
 From out the grave had come to visit me,
 And horrid moisture spreads along my brow.

I sit upright, my eyes protrude, and seek
 To scan the dark recesses of the hall ;
 And—as a charger, pressed hard by the foe,
 Getting affrighted by some sudden sound,
 Rears up and prances, struggles 'gainst the bit
 Which holds him fast, sweating with fear and
 rage,

Nostrils distended wide, and ears erect—
 So do I start, and stare around in awe,
 Stretching each quiv'ring nerve, and madly
 clutch

The nearest thing that comes within my grasp.
 And, out of breath, with palpitating heart,
 I wipe the clammy dew from off my brow.

At School

Spring, 1884

THE STORM

A FRAGMENT FROM 'THE FORSAKEN CITY'

ONE day, as on the crested deep we sailed,
Black thunder clouds swept threat'ning o'er the
sky,

And fierce uprose the elements, and played
With our brave craft as with a nautilus.

—'Quick, Captain, turn thy helm ; or we shall
ride,

Not to a haven, but to a watery grave.'—

All sail was made that we might yet escape
The Storm-fiend's fury and the Ocean's might.
And, as the lightning flashed, we lovers drew
One to the other, and by closeness seemed
Each one to gain safe-guard from harm.

And now a thick, black darkness, like a shroud,
Settled around us, changing day to night.
But, on a sudden, heaven seemed reft in twain :
Long pent-up forces tore the clouds apart,
Disclosing to our awe-struck eyes a view
Of space one lurid glare, a hell of flame.

50 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

Then,—with a crash, a deaf'ning peal—bright
flashed

A knife of fire, which, hissing through mid-air,
Sped earthward as a lightning dart from heaven.

The ship is struck, the mainmast headlong falls,
And savage flames leap upwards to the sky.
Then loud are heard above the tempest's roar
The groans and cries for help of men beneath
The fallen mast and burning wreck's débris.
Straightway I spring to lend my feeble aid
To free these men from such a fearful death.

Hardly had I my fullest strength bestowed,
Hardly begun to help this load to move,
When heaved the ship by some convulsive
power,
And seething waves swept o'er the quaking
deck.

And then a shriek—a piercing shriek—arose
Thrilling my soul and freezing all my blood,—
A shriek still ringing in my list'ning ears.
I looked, bereft of strength, my limbs inert,
Bound to the spot by some great mental spell.
I saw my loved one tossing on the waves,
Borne by the billows to a hidden fate,
Snatched, for my sins, beyond my fond
embrace.

—‘O God, have mercy ! Save her life, I pray,
And wreak thy vengeance in some other way.’

Up springs the Captain, young and tall and
strong,

Stands for a moment, then he breasts the surge.
Breathless we gaze, and motionless the waves—
As by some will divine—have now become.
The elements, so fierce erewhile, await
The issue silent, all their vigour spent.
A filmy haze comes up before my eyes,
My limbs relax, and all their strength departs :
Then tempest furies once again burst forth,
And creaks the ship as by some vengeful power.
I summon courage, ope mine eyes, and see
My loved one, safe and sound, upon the deck.

‘Saved ! Saved !’ Methought it was a dream,
would change

Once more to that blank, agonized despair.
But, no ! she smiles ; I clasp her in my arms,
And feel her form substantial, no void shade.
I haste to seal her lips with rapturous kiss,
And, heedless of aught else, express my joy
In words of tender love—when, lo ! a sight,
That checks my ecstasy, confronts our gaze.
The flames, forgotten, leap around us now,
And fiercely hem us in on every hand.

52 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

So to my bosom quick I snatch my bride,
And with her spring to meet the hissing fire :
Thus safely gain the boat manned at the side.

But see the Captain ! On the burning craft
He still remains, and with gigantic strength
Raises the prostrate yard-arm from the deck.
He hurls it from him, and then stoops once
more,
And stands erect, a body in his arms.
And now he braves the raging flames to reach
The boat still waiting for its precious freight :
Ah, joy ! This is my foster-brother, crushed
Beneath the fallen mast ; he breathes, he lives :
I pour out heartfelt thanks to him who saved
My brother and my bride,—all that I loved.

At School,
Spring, 1884.

HER SEASONS

(Written in a young lady's album)

SPRING is decked in tender green,
Brightly trill the birds.
Sweet the flowers : more sweet, I ween,
Are a maid's fair words.

Summer shines in richer colour,
With enchanting wiles.
But its charms are vastly duller
Than a maiden's smiles.

Autumn dons resplendent hues
In every leafy grove.
Who would not a kingdom lose
For a virgin's love ?

Winter howls with awesome blast ;
Ere its force abate,
Wreaks its vengeance sure and fast :
Such is woman's hate.

54 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

Summer, Spring and Autumn prove
More than Winter's tears :
Charms and graces, smiles and love,
Banish all my fears.

Brussels,

April, 1889.

SEA-FOAM

THE sailor was rocked on the ocean-wave,
And 'hurrah for the sea!' sang he.
As proud as a lion, with heart as brave,
'Heave oh, my lads!' sang he.

The sailor-boy climbed the main-mast high,
As happy as a king was he.
And again he sang, while the gulls screeched by,
And he gazed o'er the foaming sea :

'O the vast, rolling sea !
This is the place for me.
I love the moan
And the deep bass tone
Of the sea.'

In her cottage a mother sat alone ;
Around her buzzed the bee,
But she heard it not, for her thoughts had flown
To her boy on the distant sea.

Soft breezes played with her snow-white hair,
But with heavy heart sighed she.
For her soul was filled with an aching care,—
Ah, she loved that truant at sea !

56 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

O sailor lad, though you love to roam,
Return to your aged mother !
She is praying for you in the dear old home,
As ne'er has prayed another.

‘ But I love the mighty sea,
Where all is wild and free.
I love to roll
In the cavernous bowl
Of the sea.’

The gulls screech on, and the waves lash high ;
The Storm-fiend howls in his glee.
The ship's oak bulwarks asunder fly,
In rushes the raging sea.

The sailor-boy thought of his mother, I ween,
And uttered one prayer the while.
The Ocean-sprite, as he gazed on the scene,
Exclaimed with a hideous smile :

‘ Ah, yes, 'tis the rolling sea
That shall open its arms for thee.
O, what so dight
With terrible might
As the sea ?’

King St., Covent Garden.
March, 1895

ESPÉRANCES D'AMOUR

A FRAGMENT

HOPES oft are like a silver lake—
The mirror of a promised scene :
When in its depths a plunge we take,
Its heart belies that face serene.

Or as, when gladly to our lips,
The brimming bowl, with rich wine filled,
Is borne with eager haste, it slips,
And all the precious draught is spilled.

So, too, when love's deep longing seems
In safe embrace almost to hold
The phantom of its loftiest dreams,
Its all of bliss, perchance, is told.

And as a child, one sunny day
Will chase his shadows high and low,
And finds that, run how fast he may,
The shadow still as fast will go :

58 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

So, spurred by hope, in vain pursuit,
One strives to win the reigning Queen,
Who coldly heeds not love's dispute,
But e'er as far, as near is seen.

Brussels.

^yFeb. 1889.

NATURE'S TRIUMPH

Is 't a dream that besets me awake
Of a life in an unreal world,
That recurs to my thoughts as they oft
On the wheel of remembrance are whirled ?

Is it dream, is it vision, or love
That makes to arise in my mind
A feeling of tender regret
For the days that are left far behind ?

When full youth tingled hot in my veins,
And ambition throbbed high in my heart ;
When boisterous gaiety seemed
Of the brightest of mornings a part.

Nature lavishly spread all around
The smiles of a Midsummer day.
She laughed,—how she laughed ! Ha ! ha !
 ha !—
No limits controlled her display.

For she thought none could equal her art,
Her trees and her flowers so gay.
But, Nature, beware, oh, beware !
Ere your arrogance turn to dismay.

But she laughed on so loud in delight
That the tear-drops stood in her eyes ;
(Men thought it was diamond dew,
Nor viewed it with any surprise.)

And brighter and brighter she grew,
More ruddy at each renewed peal :
From the earth in her beauty adorned,
Supremacy no one could steal !

So her merriment reached its full height,
When the unwilling wind fanned sweet
 sounds
Of a voice approaching more near,
Of cadence that Nature astounds.

Then a light, tripping footstep drew
 nigh,
And a bright, singing Maiden appeared.
She leapt and she skipt in her joy,
A thing to be loved and revered.

O Nature, no rivalry here !
Not a flower will she recklessly crush !—
But Nature was silent, dismayed,
And hung down her head with a blush.

Then she wept, and she wept, and she wept,
And the tear-drops fell from her eyes.
(Men thought them the signs of a storm
About to sweep over the skies.)

She continued to weep, and she wept
Till the Sun in the sky hid his face,
And the Southwind disgustedly tried
To fan back her far-banished grace.

And he blew, and he blew, and he blew :
But her grace had turned to disgrace.
So black clouds swept over the sky,
And of bright blue and white took the place.

Then my angel looked upward to heaven :
(I thought it her proper abode.)
But she looked, and she looked, and she
looked,
And her hair down her white shoulders
flowed.

62 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

Then the cloud shed more ominous drops,
That fell, like big tears, few at first ;
But overflowing at heart,
In a burning-hot shower it burst.

It poured, and it poured, and it poured,
And quickly the fair Maiden ran
To seek shelter from neighbourly trees,
Ere the storm's full fury began.

But Nature had had her revenge :
This flower was nipped in the bud.
For a chill had passed to her heart,
And its touch was to stem her life-blood.

Then the Southwind blew, how he blew !
Till the storm-clouds were swept quite
away.
Then he silenced himself for awhile,
And Nature renewed her display.

And she laughed, and she laughed, and
she laughed,
Till the tears stood again in her eyes.
(Men thought they were big drops of rain,
Just fallen down from the skies).

And she laughed,—for her rival was gone,
A rival, though unconscious she be.
Then she laughed and she wept both in
turn,—
What maiden so merry as she !

But they buried the bright, fairy girl,
Down under the dark, dank, cold sod.
And her lover watered her grave
With his tears, and doubted his God.

And I think, and I think, and I think
Of the days when she breathed this earth's air,
Perfection in form and in face,
Unknowing anxiety and care.

Ah ! no dream, no vision, but love
That makes to arise in my mind
This feeling of tender regret
For the days that are left far behind.

Existence, they say, is so short
In this world ; but life seems too long :
For I wish to be dead, to be dead,
With the Maiden to whom I belong.

Wellingborough.
Dec. 1885.

AN INVOCATION

O MUSE, that oft in days departed
Brought me the truest joys that life contained,
Where art thou flown, who once imparted
Thy kiss of inspiration unrestrained?

O Muse, a lily long I've sought for,
A maiden pure to fill my halting song,
True emblem of the love I wrought for :
Be kind, dear Muse, nor keep me waiting long.

How can I sing of that right, constant love,
Which steadfast stands through all the changing
years,
If Fate and thou will not conspire to prove
That such exists? End all my hopes in tears?

Are all earth's beauteous maids but Roses,
Who hotly love awhile, then fickle blast
The heart that foolishly reposes
Implicit faith in them? Does *no* love last?

Yes, Muse, o'er many flowers I've hovered,
And sought—ah! longed that *perfect* truth to
find.

Nor Rose nor Lily have I yet discovered,
Whose bosom perfume unalloyed confined.

And now, sweet Muse, this is my prayer :
Wilt thou create me an ideal love ?

Unlike the Rose, that false betrayer ;
And let the Lily a just symbol prove.

Wandsworth Common.

Oct. 1895.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS

A ROMANCE OF LIFE'S GARDEN

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS

A ROMANCE OF LIFE'S GARDEN

INTRODUCTION : THE GARDEN

IN the fairest of gardens that Nature possesses,
 'Mid flowers and trees, on a soft mossy bed
Reclining I revelled in sunshine caresses
 And the perfume of roses that fragrantly
 spread.

Gentle peace reigned supreme in the heavens
 and air,

 Bestowing her calm upon every heart ;
And joyous the music that rose everywhere,
 Sweet cadence that Nature delights to impart.

 Merrily warbled the lark in the sky,

 And carolled the linnet her lay ;

Each of them sought with the other to vie,

 Intent to prolong

 The beautiful song

 All the day.

Gay, too, was the hymn of the morn,
 And in harmony mingled each strain.
 That melody, only inborn,
 Was repeated again and again :
 But the more the sweet tune was renewed
 Still ever more charming it grew,
 Till the Soul with its bliss was imbued,
 By its influence thrilled through and through.
 Each flower nodded its head,
 While lazily droned the bee ;
 For Nature's ill-humour had fled.
 She lavished her smiles
 And her prettiest wiles
 All for me.

Noisily tumbled the brook
 On his way to grim Mother Ocean.
 And he babbled in every nook
 With his bustling, perpetual motion,
 Small trifles of information.
 For though in a desperate hurry
 To arrive at his destination,
 He's a gossip at heart, and a worry.

But on this particular day
 His usual, mad agitation
 Had taken to flight and away,
 Giving place to a milder sensation.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 71

Though he dashed,
And he splashed,
And rippled and swirled,
Or foamingly crashed
Till the pebbles were whirled,
In his clamour and noise there were notes
sweeter far
Than in watery tumults there commonly are.
For the music he chaunted was blithesome and
gay,
As on through the woodlands he wended his
way :
His ripples laughed lightly, while on them
there glanced
Soft sunbeams, which merrily, merrily danced.

As a journey it took
From the sky to the brook,
Through the air and trees penetrating,
Out of bright blue and green
The soft, golden sheen
Spread a brilliancy never abating ;
While a watery crest
From its prismatic breast,
Like a billow of diamond spray,
Cast rainbows of light—
A glorious sight !—
Seven colours from each sunny ray.

.

Oh ! gorgeously beamed the Sun,
 And gladsomely beat my heart,
 For Summer had proudly begun
 To ply her fair art.

And flowers commenced to rejoice,
 And wake under Nature's sweet kiss,
 As in concord united each voice
 To sing of its bliss.

And enjoying this anthem of gladness
 And the perfumes that spread all around,
 Dispelling all notion of sadness
 From sight and from sound,
 I hark to the Song of the Summer,
 Arising afar and anear,
 And list to the gay insect-comer
 That sings in my ear.

From exploring the banks of the brooklet,
 And sipping the dew of the flowers,
 And prying in every odd nooklet,
 And all leafy bowers,—

A dragon-fly skims o'er the water,
 Now dipping his light, gauzy wings,
 Not seeming a moment to falter
 As onward he springs.

And there seem to be words to the psalm
 That he sings,—for my pleasure, I wis,—
 For there steals o'er my soul a sweet calm—
 Its tenour is this :

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 73

‘Hail, morning of brightness ! Hail, day of
content !

Hail, bounteous Sun, in thy glory God-sent !
O welcome, ye breezes, so eagerly quaff’d,
And the perfume of flowers ye lavishly waft !

‘Now list to a problem I wish to propose ;
A problem that meaning profound will enclose :
Say, what is this Garden, so glorious and
bright,
So decked with gay colours, so radiant in light ?

‘Oh, what is this fountain of pleasure and play,
Where is spent in delight this luxuriant day ?
And what is this brook, that runs rippling along,
That changes so often the tune of its song ?

‘Oh, what are these flowers that everywhere
spread,
All smiling so gaily, and nodding the head ?
And what are we insects, that e’en on the wing
And gathering sweetness, unceasingly sing ?’

The dragon-fly speeds on his course,
And darts, spite of prickle and thorn,
In the midst of a thicket of gorse
As yellow as morn.

And I wonder, and try to resolve
The problem so cunningly set ;
But the more in my mind I revolve
More perplexed do I get.
At length a great bumble-bee drones
In my bower, and makes a reply,
In languid, monotonous tones,
To the gay dragon-fly.

‘ This Garden is the World,’ it ran,
‘ The wondrous dwelling-place of man.
The trees and flowers, birds and bees,
The insects flitting on the breeze,
And those condemned in lowlier state
With earth-born kind alone to mate,
Are emblems of the human race,
Presenting every varied trace
Of elegance and taste refined,
Or base and loathsome, vile or blind.
Here stands a tree of noble birth,
An honour to his mother, Earth ;
High is his head, and proud his mien,
Firm is his bark, his leaves dark green ;
His roots spread far, and deeply dip
Their steady and tenacious grip.—
He is a warrior, stern and bold,
Whom many a mighty nation hold
In reverential awe, yet love
The sentiments that in him move.

Sad be the day when woodman Death,
With sharpened axe and striving breath,
Shall sunder life ; the forest round
Is desolate and sorrow-bound.

‘ Sweet blush the flowers,—fair maidens, coy,
Who many sunny hours employ
In female arts, coquettish wiles,
Or lavishing enchanting smiles.
While men, gallànt, as insects born,
Sip honey there from morn till morn,
And find in love a fitting food
To feed an unsubstantial mood.

‘ Doomed to existence in the sod,
Beneath the reckless footstep trod,
Despised of all humanity,
And scorned by soaring vanity—
The sneaking earthworm crawls along,
Nor makes he an attempt at song.
For song is gay, and song is free ;
In happiness alone can be
The soul of all true melody.

‘ The babbling brook, the fountain bright
With sun-tipped, laughter-flashing light—
Lure of the frail ! O ’witching sight,
With magic fascination dight !—
These represent Society
In all its fair variety.

But cold as is the winter's flood,
 The North Wind's breath to the opening bud,
 Intangible as is the cloud
 With summer whiteness all endowed,—
 Such is the dashing, tumbling stream,
 And such the water's chilling gleam.
 And, hastened to uncertain fate,
 The one who ventures in its heart
 May feel its force—alas ! too late
 From its malign embrace to part.
 A broken promise, perjured word,
 A sweet fulfilment e'er deferred,
 A crystal mirror's surface blurred,—
 Such is *High Life, Society*,
 And pleasure-seeking to satiety.
 A workless life—
 An endless strife
 To clip the wings of fleeting gaiety.

'Thus view this Garden, bright and gay,
 The smiling flowers, each sunny ray ;
 And hear the buzz of many a voice,
 Which all unite to form one song
 Whose tenour is " Rejoice, rejoice !
 The summer day will not last long." '

.
 With a start I awoke from a dream
 That troubled the peace of my sleep :

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 77

For the bumble-bee's buzzing would seem
Like a lullaby deep.

And with calm in the heavens and air,
And music in every sound,
With Nature so joyfully fair,

Soon in slumber profound
My senses had drowsily slept,
And were held in the arms of repose,
Till the shadows of evening had crept
Up in lengthening rows.

And the Sun was replaced by the Moon,
Warm gold by cold, silvery rays :
For as Life into Death merges soon,
So nights follow days.

Brussels,

Oct. & Nov. 1888.

PART I.

BEAUTY'S CONQUEST

Exploring high, exploring low,
Over hills and dales I go,
Sole mortal in these fairy bowers,
Surrounded by sweet, phantom flowers.
All around are smiles and laughter,
Peal on peal, a third peal after ;
Merry singing, coy coquetting,
Ne'er a pang dull Care abetting :
All the gaiety prolong,
Recking nought of right or wrong.
Harebells ring their merry chime,
All in tune, unerring rhyme ;
Violets so unobtrusive
Shed their influence effusive,
Spreading in the balmy air
Essences of virtue rare.
Fuchsias nodding, roses glowing,
Blushing, in perfection showing
Faultless form, symmetric figure,
Filled with health and youthful vigour ;

Pansies dressed in softest velvet ;
Mignonette with perfume dulcet ;
Maidenhair in bending grace ;
Hyacinths in simple beauty :
Flowers wild here find a place,
Cultured ones do also duty.
Some are robed in many a colour ;
Some have garments plainer, duller ;
Some are pure as alabaster ;
Some, bejewelled, court disaster.
Some rejoice in rounded form ;
Some could scarce withstand a storm ;
Red and white and blue and green
Mingle in the golden sheen.

Flirting here and flirting there,
I bless this summer day ;
Chatting with one maiden fair,
Till she trips away.

Then another, coy, capricious,
Prattles with beguiling charm ;
Now coquettish, now malicious,
Rousing many a heart's alarm.

Primrose turns her open face,
Smiling looks in mine ;
In her honest lines I trace
Innocence divine.

Honeysuckle, sweet and fragrant,
 With the laughing eyes,
 Love of mischief lurking, vagrant,
 Flattery defies.

And Convolvulus, so fragile,
 White-complexioned, tinged with pink,
 Figure slender, movements agile,
 Twines love's fetters, link by link.

.

And thus the time merrily speeds on ; alas !
 Brief happiness hurries away ;
 Fain would I hinder the moments that pass,
 And make them delay.

But Time is perverse, and flies quickest
 along
 When his presence gives greatest delight.
 And when we most wish happy hours to
 prolong,
 Then fastest they fade into night.

Soon twilight replaces the sun's fairy beams,
 And duty compels me away.
 Already some Flowerets prepare for sweet
 dreams
 In attending another bright day.

So I pass through the beautiful throng,
 And try to escape from its meshes ;
 But e'en as I saunter along,
 Reluctance refreshes.

For already behind are the flowers,
 And around the o'ershadowing eaves
 Of the destitute trunks make no bowers
 Of clustering leaves.
 And the gloom of their shadow de-
 scends
 To the depths of my ill-content heart ;
 And regret of past happiness blends
 With the thoughts they impart.

As I angrily make my way on,
 And recklessly crush in the sod
 Whatever my foot falls upon,
 Whether insect or clod,
 Of a sudden I feel the restraint
 Of fiercely-enveloping hands ;
 My captor ignores my complaint,
 And tightens my bands.

With quick passion I cast them apart,
 For his weapons bring sudden distress ;
 With a thirst for revenge in my heart
 To the conflict I press.

And my sword from its scabbard springs
 forth,
And shines in the glimmering sun :
I prepare to give vent to my wrath,
 But have scarcely begun,

When out from the thicket of thorny briar,
In radiance clad and gay attire,
 There steps the Queen of the Flowers.
I drop my weapon ; she deigns a smile ;
I hold my eyes downcast meanwhile,
 For in one of her private bowers,
In my careless wanderings up and down,
I have trespassed, and deserve a frown ;
 Bright smiles instead she showers.

Her henchman—the thorny rose-bud bush—
In seeing me rudely and blindly push,
 As I almost trample the Rose,
Has restrained my mad, uncaring course,
And, alarmed for his charge, has stayed me
 perforce ;
 And thus the red blood flows.
But my wounds are slight ; with adoring
 gaze
I eagerly watch her enchanting ways,
 As another bright smile she throws.

And though to female fascinations,
Impassioned love, and quick pulsations,
My heart is nowise stranger,
Yet from her glance, her dainty mien,
The blush that in her cheek is seen,
I find my heart in danger.
Her figure round, her heaving breast,
Her youthful strength above the rest
Of lovely flowers range her.

Oh ! how is love so strangely brewed !
When in a savage, churlish mood
Out burst my smould'ring wrath ;
When martial passion keened my sword,
And splenic flames within me roared,
And fiercely thundered forth :
A single glance, one transient smile
Allay my ire, and calm meanwhile
My fury's seething froth.

But the slanting rays of the setting sun,
While the wish of my heart is still unwon,
Are falling below the horizon.
And uncertain gleams of golden light
Dart, sword-like, through the approaching
night,
And all around bedizen

84 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

With the radiant glow of jewels bright :
And beautifies the dazzling sight
Whate'er I cast my eyes on.

Again I gaze in the flickering beams
Where the Rose of my Heart, the Queen of my
Dreams

In her damask-red garments is standing ;
And I take the resolve to woo her now ;
For my pulse runs high ; I know not how
To curb its mad expanding.

But consumed with the ardour of love, I spring
Past the thicket of thorns that round her
cling,
A path to her side demanding.

But scarce have I gazed in her beautiful face,
And hardly rejoiced in her exquisite grace,
And the welcoming smile of her lips ;
Scarce stretched out my arms, and all but
embraced,
And the sweets of her mouth endeavoured to
taste,
Drinking honey in feverish sips :
When a golden flash from the sinking sun
Hovers around her, then falls and is done,
And the world is lost in eclipse.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 85

The black cloak of night all settled around,
And enveloped the earth in its darkness profound,

And no longer the Rose could I see.
I essayed to enfold to my bosom her form,
And there to retain her through rough wind
and storm,

But I wist not now where she could be :
For my arms met only resistless air,
And the Rose had vanished, like dreamed-of
fare,

Which, so tempting, untasted will flee.

And I wandered about through the brooding
night,

And called out her name with my main and my
might ;

But never a sound did she utter.
And I sought for the Rose over hill and o'er
dale,

In the forest glade, and the open vale,
With my anxious heart in a flutter,
If, perchance, I heard some rustling tone,
A creaking twig, or some fancied moan,
Or a bee in his slumbering mutter.

But at length in the blackness I faintly discern
A lantern-like glimmer to flittingly burn
In the sodden and desolate lea.

86 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

Then forward I press, all regardless of thorns,
Of spear-pointed briars and thistledown corns,
Where it dances from tree to tree.

But, a will-o'-the-wisp, it escapes from my sight,
And phantom-like, fades in the horror of night,
When I come where I thought it to be.

And thus in pursuit of intangible fires—
For my heart says, the fair one for whom it
aspires

Is near the e'er-vanishing light—
In seeking to reach what escapes from my
clasp,

But to twinkle anon far away from my grasp,
I pass many hours of the night.

And the feverish longing of deeply-born love
Burns hot in my heart as yet onward I move,
Ever hoping to stay a new flight.

As in futile endeavour I dash down the lea,
Then again to the place where the lantern I see,
My mind is oppressed by the thought :

That the will-o'-the-wisp is as flighty as day,
And will ever persist in its skipping away,

Howe'er it be ardently sought ;
And the light so attractive, will bring but
dismay

To the wanderer lured by its treacherous ray,
And experience dearly be bought.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 87

Little heeding such thoughts as they pass in
my mind,
Yet still I endeavour the Rose to find,
And follow the dancing light.
When, lo ! to amazement, it stops in its course ;
Led on by its glimmer, I eagerly force,
In determined and desperate fight,
A way past the rushes that bar my advance,
And the trees, and the thistle's deep-piercing
lance,
Keeping always the beacon in sight ;

Till at last I arrive with precipitous pace
At the spot where in vain I essayed to embrace,
Where my wishes were first disappointed.
And there, to my joy, by the phosphoric light
That hovers around, is revealed to my sight
The Rose, Queen of the Flowers anointed.
A moment I pause in an ecstasy sweet,
Then madly past all that would hinder I fleet
Tow'rd the goal my passion appointed.

.
And now the morning breaks o'er hill and dale,
And golden sunbeams light up every vale.
The spectral weirdness of elusive fire
Dies out before the Earth's new, gay attire ;

88 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

And brilliant colours hail the arising dawn
 As gleams of brightness from the sky are drawn ;
 The futile hope of Tantalus is reft :
 The joy of hope fulfilled instead is left.

As the first rays of light
 From the genial sun
 Flashed their omens so bright
 Of a day new-begun,
 The Rose gracefully turned
 With a summer-like smile,
 And the flame of love burned
 In her dark eyes meanwhile.
 And she lifted her beautiful orbs,
 And looked in my face
 With the charm that from passion absorbs
 Celestial grace.
 Then, extending her little white hands
 With their red-blushing tips,
 Words granting my dearest demands
 Escaped from her lips.

‘ O ardent Love, thy fond entreating
 As still away I wandered fleeting,
 Now earns reward ; henceforth for ever
 No mortal power our hearts shall sever.
 And judge not from my longsome flight
 My love for thee is slight :

For, oh ! that flight has been to me
Full quite as hard as e'en to thee.

But now I cry
O Dear One, stay !
No more I fly,
Avaunt, Dismay !

Now that thy wishes rule the day
Turn not in cold disgust away.'

Forsooth I wait no further pleading,
And only present triumph heeding,
I straightway hold in firm embrace
Her dainty form, so 'dowed with grace.
And the ravishing touch of her arms round my
neck
As she nestles her sweet-scented head on my
breast,
Her abandon of love, her utter unreck,
All quicken my flame with intensified zest.
And in tasting the love of her lips
I cherished the love of my heart ;
And 'mid feverish sips,
I declared that my arms
Should e'er guard her charms,
That we never would part.

Then she looked in my eyes, and I looked in
hers,

And valued that gaze more than all my past
fears.

So we walked,
And we talked,

And our passion grew stronger,
And we wished the brief hours would last
longer,

Much longer.

When I vowed I would ever be true,
She feigned that she could not believe me ;
But her dark eyes that pierced me through
Quite failed to deceive me.

And I knew she perceived that the love of my
heart,

Though born in a moment, would never depart.

At length she asks with gracious smile
Where turned my course, when, churlish,
savage,

I wandered in so vague a style,
Regardless of my wanton ravage,
Not dreaming I should all but miss
A happiness so sweet as this.

Her question, like a wintry blast
In midst of summer's richest glory,
Quells love's delight, and checks aghast
The tenour of her lover's story ;

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 91

And freezes on his lips the kiss
That lacks alone to perfect bliss.

‘O Loved One,’ I exclaim with passion,
‘In answer to the call of duty
I sauntered in reluctant fashion,
And loath to leave the Haunts of Beauty.
But when I saw that winsome face,
My heart was captured by its grace ;
And love o’erwhelmed my every thought,
Except of her for whom I sought.’

Awhile she stands with downcast eyes
And heaving breast, but vainly tries
 To calm her quiv’ring lip.
She lifts at length her troubled gaze,
Suffused with crystal drops of dew,
And tenderly her ’hest conveys
 With many a falt’ring slip,
That I must now my course renew :
‘O Dearest Heart,’ she sadly said,
 ‘When honour is in danger,
 Love must give place
 To duty’s stead ;
 And for a space,
 To love’s demands a stranger,
You must in exile far depart :
But, Dear,—you take hence too my heart.

'Oh, no! Oh, no!' I hotly cry,
 'I will not leave thee ere I die!
 Should sun and moon forget their course,
 Should angels suffer hell's remorse,
 Should earthquakes crash,
 And lightnings flash,
 And mothers slight their infants' cries,—
 Yet, while God hears our human sighs,
 I'll stay with thee,
 I'll stay with thee.'

'You love me, Dearest? Love is great
 And laughs at Fortune's changeful wiles.
 Perform your duty ere too late,
 And quick return for well-earned smiles.
 And thus I shall prove you trusty and
 true,
 And know that 'twas not in a fickle mood
 You neglected duty and turned to woo,
 And so hotly the phantom of love pursued.'

As she uttered the sentence of banishment,
 tears
 Of anguish gushed fast to my eyes.
 And remembrance of all my but just-dispelled
 fears
 Once more in my mind did arise.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 93

Then with heart disappointed and ready to
break,
From the wrack of my soul I despairingly
spake :

‘ Oh, better that ne’er we had loved,
Than so soon from each other to part !
And better that ne’er had been moved
The depths of each heart !

‘ Oh, better my unfulfilled hopes,
As I traversed the woodland and lea !
Oh, better have spent all my life
In vain search for thee !

‘ Or better the treacherous swamp,
As I hunted the magical sprite,
Had opened its miry embrace,
Left untried this delight !

‘ All better, far better, than thus
When in lover’s first rapture to find
That bliss so surpassingly sweet
Must pass out of mind.’

‘ Oh, say not so !—ne’er out of mind !
In times adverse, ’mid fates unkind,

When 'whelming trouble, aching care
 Oppress thee more than thou canst bear,
 Remember what joy is to be,
 And think of me.

' And some time in these gardens bright
 Rough winds may howl with furious might;
 Then I shall too have needs recourse
 To arm me 'gainst their battling force
 By thoughts of thee.

' For thou wilt be my all in all,
 My stay when winter's blasts shall brawl,
 My strength when youth and maiden-bloom
 Shall fade and tarnish in the gloom,—
 Then, though thou hast forgotten me,
 I 'll think of thee.'

Awhile I spoke not ; in my arms
 I strained her fast with fevered love.
 Her boding words roused vague alarms,
 Which 'gainst her bidding wildly strove.
 But how should misty fears prevail
 When longer stay meant honour's knell?
 Her fond ' Adieu ' and kiss curtail
 The ling'ring, oft-renewed farewell.

‘Good-bye, dear Heart, good-bye,’ she
said,

‘May happiness attend thee ever :
Trust in my love ; secure from dread,
May true success crown each endeavour.’

.
I paused ere losing her from sight
And waved a last farewell.
Upon a moss-robed bank she stood,
With morning’s glorious radiance dight ;
Bathed in the summer’s yellow light,
She cast a wondrous spell
Upon my soul as through the wood
I wended in reluctant mood.
And thus I left th’ enchanting scene,
Of which, amid the golden sheen,
And Nature’s sparkling, dew-tipped
green
On her my last gaze fell.
With heavy heart I took the way
That from my Darling ever lay
Farther away, away.

Then first when she was lost to sight,
Her bell-like voice rings out so bright,
And cheers me with its song.

In turn I too take up the strain,
 And join at length the last refrain,
 And so the tune prolong ;
 Till, dying on the rustling wind,
 Her soft sweet notes are left behind.

(SONG)

She. Oh, tarry not, dear Love, upon thy course,
 But quick return, for here I linger wait-
 ing.

In summer's sunshine and in winter's force
 My constancy will e'er be unabating.

So, Love, make haste and quick return ;
 I'll think of thee the livelong day.
 Whate'er befall, my heart will yearn
 And chafe beneath the harsh delay.

He. I'll tarry not, dear Love, nor on my
 course,

Nor when the duty of the day may worry,
 But e'er to thee, my Own, my true love's
 source,

I'll seek with zeal upon the way to hurry.

So I'll make haste and quick return,
 As soon as all my toils are past ;
 Then crossing mountains grim and stern,
 I'll bend my steps to thee at last.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 97

She. O Love, return !

He. I'll quick return.

Ensemble. And heed not changing weather.
With love I burn,
For thee I'll yearn,
Till we're again together.

She. Oh, tarry not, dear Love, as in sweet
glades
Fair flow'rs may blush and lavish smiles
enchanting ;
And stay not flirting with coquettish maids,
Who saunter on thy path, the byways
haunting.
And mark not how the linnet sings :
Her songs are snares to trap thy heart ;
And when the lark her soft lay brings,
She seeks thee and thy love to part.

He. I'll tarry not, dear Love, though flowers
may smile,
And charming maids with blushes seek to
tempt me.
And, too, I ween, though birds use many
a wile,
My ardent love from trapping will exempt
me.

98 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

For all my thoughts will be of thee—
Thy wondrous grace, thy sparkling glance,
Thy full, rich voice, whose melody
The beauties of thy form enhance.

He. So I 'll return.

She. Oh, quick return.

Ensemble. And heed not changing weather.
With love I burn,
For thee I 'll yearn,
Till we 're again together.

Brussels.

Dec. 1888 & Jan - March, 1889.

PART II.

WINTER'S BLAST

*'Lastly came Winter, clothèd all in frieze,
Chatt'ring his teeth for cold that did him chill;
Whilst on his hoary beard his breath did freeze.'*

SPENSER.

*'The wrathful winter, hast'ning on apace,
With blust'ring blasts had all ybar'd the treen.
The soil that erst so seemly was to seen;
Was all despoilèd of her beauty's hue;
And soot fresh flowers (wherewith the summer's Queen
Had clad the earth) now Boreas' blasts down blew.'*

SACKVILLE.

To summer's end, through autumn sere,
I wrought the duty of the year.
I plied with might, I strove with main,
With hands I worked, with heart and
brain,—
Thirsting the while to find me near
The Rose again.

My work was hard—a hateful toil,
 A constant, wearing, changeless moil.
 But ne'er before with equal hate
 Had I fulfilled my irksome fate,
 As now, when meanest tasks despoil
 My love so great.

Oft through this uncongenial while,
 Far from her light, her gaysome smile,
 My thoughts would soar to lands more dear
 And bear me, all in fancy, near
 My tender Rose ; then would exile
 Seem yet more drear.

When, too, at rest by night I lay,
 Reposing from the toils of day,
 My mind would often take to flight,
 In dreams my Loved One beam in sight :
 Awhile again with her I'd stay,—
 A happy wight.

Again I'd hear her cheering voice,
 Again in new-born love rejoice ;
 Once more rebellious wishes quell.
 Strong for my task, steeled to excel,
 I'd wake—for ever waking cloy
 A vision's spell.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 101

Well was it that this fragile flower
Grew in the sunny phantom bower ;
Else would my hopes in vain have been
Of seeing her again, I ween.
But, save 'gainst Nature's spite, her power
 Could stand serene.

For brief though be a rose's life
In earthly gardens, where are rife
Chill summer gusts,—more long their day
In fairy arbours, blithe and gay ;
And only after stubborn strife
 They fade away.

And thus in hoping still prolonged,
The final days of Autumn thronged.
The green leaves sadly changed to brown,
Then, one by one, 'gan falling down.
I feared lest love be robbed and wronged
 By Nature's frown.

I spent no time in futile plaint,
Nor lavished aught my grief to paint
In colours dimmed by greeting tears.
Nor half expressed my vaguest fears
That, waiting long, *her* love might faint
 Ere winter nears.

For not ere winter's chill wind blows,
And seeks to pierce to the frail Rose ;
And not ere many a sombre cloud
Has cast around a white-flaked shroud,
Does duty end, and is repose
At length allowed.

Then hasting o'er the mountain's crest,
Not pausing once for well-earned rest ;
Across the desert, broad and bare,
E'er toward my goal—her garden fair—
With beating heart I hoping pressed
To find her there.

What fervent prayers, as toiling on
To reach her bower, my heart pours forth !
How hard my course, my way how long !
Ill is contained my rising wrath.
And meanwhile furious tempests throng
From the bleak north.

The blast whirls mad the heights around,
And shrieks aloud its fearful sound,
As, echoed in the mountain caves,
It tells of death and waiting graves ;
And quakes with awe the very ground,
While the wind raves.

At length the final ridge I pass,
 And view afar the longed-for bower.
 But, though I strain my eyes,—alas!
 I nowhere see a single flower.
 Has Heaven's breath failed to surpass
 The Storm-wind's power?

And gruesome doubts my hopes becloud
 Lest *she* to winter's force be bowed.
 Though life with them was one bright day,
 All, all have ceased their summer's play,
 And died, or e'en—a phantom crowd—
 Have flown away.

.

The Garden in a valley lies ;
 Around tall, rugged mountains loom,
 And shelter by their giant size
 The gentle flowers' rare-fading bloom,
 Disperse black clouds, reserve blue skies,
 Defy the tomb.

And stalwart timber close around,
 Uprearing heads with foliage dense,
 Protects the grove, makes to abound
 An atmosphere of peace intense,
 And balmy breezes, scarcely found,
 Soothe every sense.

And rarely storms can force their way,
 Or winter's snows exert their sway.
 E'er shines the sun, unknown the moon :
 In one unbroken; cloudless noon
 Time fleets unmarked—a year, a day :
 A golden boon.

To Rose, the summer's course—one hour.
 The tempest—but a 'freshing shower :
 Save when, like this, a winter's blast
 Howls furious the high mountains past ;
 But strong as fair, the Rosebud flower
 May yet stand fast.

And in her bounds no evenings stir :
 My night of quest—no night to her—
 Was but a phase of new delight ;
 Still in her bower the sun shone bright
 When darkness seemed the scene to blur,
 Rose lost to sight.

How fierce this tempest, then, to break
 Beyond death's limits ! and to make
 Such fearful havoc in a realm
 Guarded so well by time-proved elm,
 And cedars who will hardly shake
 Their crested helm !

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 105

What carnage has the storm-fiend wrought,
That trunks of beech should lie athwart
Uprooted oaks, whose towering pride
Is by this blast so hardly tried !
Yet is their wreck with mettle fraught
Untamed, unvied.

But loud the storm its mocking tone,
And keener e'er the increasing cold,
When on the sobbing wind a moan
Seems borne across the dreary wold.
Then haste I more, my Love, my Own,
Safe to enfold.

And anguish thrills my boding soul :
Shall we but meet, once more to part ?—
Chill dread upon my spirit stole,
And froze my limbs, benumbed my heart.
'Sweet Rose, bear up ; my Hope, my Goal,
To thee I dart.'

X
I sought her long in the ruined bower,
My soul on the rack of despair.
In vain I sought for my sweetheart flower,
With ever-persisting care.
Till hope's last spark was dying,
And all that I wished was death,
That as life this boon was denying
Might pass away too my breath.

X Thus far, Brussels, April 1880

So, wearied and worn with my toilsome
 course,
 I staggered along with fast-failing force ;
 And overwhelmed with despair, at length
 I prostrate sank, all devoid of strength.

As thus I lay with mind distraught,
 My frame was on a sudden fraught
 With balmy warmth, that, through me
 stealing,
 Infused new hope and life and healing.
 This gift of shattered force renewed
 Seemed by some luscious scent endued,
 Which through my vital being spread,
 Relieved my brain, allayed my dread ;
 And, coursing in my loosened veins,
 The quickened blood swept off my pains.

I stirred, and marvelling around
 Eagerly peered, but vainly scann'd
 The farthest realms of sky and land ;
 Till on the ground
 Close at my feet I cast my eyes.
 And there I see—ah ! glad surprise !—
 The long-sought Rose :
 But woe the day !
 The storm-wind blows
 Her life away ;

Her head is drooping on the sod,
 Her guardian briar quite down-trod.
 Stript stark the valiant henchman lay,
 Yielding at length to Boreas' sway ;
 And, tangled, bruised, and contest-riven,
 To save his Queen, his life has given.

I knelt beside her ; to my breast
 Her fainting form I wildly prest.
 Saved by the perfume she had given,
 As on the wintry air
 Her life she shed,
 I made one fervent prayer—
 Nay, *vowed*, well-nigh to madness driven—
 That this frail thread
 Still binding her to earth
 Should only sever
 If with her death
 Should pass my breath ;
 And if to heaven her soul was drawn
 Mine too should hail a second birth,
 Another dawn,
 Nor quit her ever !

The forest's wreck that lay around,
 Embarrassing the tree-strown ground,—
 The ruins of her chosen bower,
 No more gave shelter from the power
 Of winter's blast.

So in my arms I strained her fast,
 And bore her thence, to where a clift
 Of granite rose. There in a rift,
 All moss-lined 'spite the biting frost,
 I placed her. Now my fears are lost ;
 For, cherished on my throbbing breast,
 She gains new life : love does the rest.

And thus on through the winter's cold,
 Buoyed ever by fresh-rising hope,
 I nursed the Rosebud ; but untold
 Remained my care's increasing scope.
 For, threatened still 'twixt health and
 woe,

Her life oft trembled in the balance ;
 And lasted long the frost and snow,
 Long was the Sun-god veiled in dal-
 liance.

At length he broke the dismal shroud,
 And shooting forth in golden glory,
 Dispelled, along with winter's cloud,
 The fears and dreads of our love's story.

.

She opened at length her beautiful eyes,
 As if from sweet dreams awaking ;
 And a dainty blush on her cheek did rise,
 Like the hue of red dawn out-breaking.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 109

And she smiled glad welcome and heart-born
thanks ;

I smoothed out her tangled tresses,
And vented my joy in mad-like pranks,
With a thousand and one caresses.

‘Thou hast not then forgotten me,
Dear Love?’ I gladly cried.

‘Remainest ever true to me,
And lovest none beside?
The cruel winter has not chilled
The well-springs of thy heart?
And is it with affection filled
As when we last did part?’

‘Sweet, I am always thine,—
Thine to eternity.
All that was ever mine,
Now, sweet, belongs to thee.

‘Dear, as in gardens gay
Careless I wandered free,
Thou stole my heart away,
And mad’st a slave of me.

‘Love of my Soul, my Friend,
(What greater name can be?)
Where’er thy steps may stray,

I too my course will bend,
Ever with thee
I will away, away,
Far from bright scenes away
On thee to tend.'

Mulroy Castle, Ireland.
Aug. 1889.

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS III

PART III.

LOVE'S TEST

Weep not for Summer's death and Autumn
sere,
Now dash from out thine eye the starting tear,
And welcome in the glad New Year.

Greet not for Winter's gloom ; its reign is past.
Greet not that havoc all around was cast.
Troubles are o'er ; Spring comes at last.

Rejoice ! the Sun bursts through the sombre
mist.

Rejoice ! his rays the frozen earth have kist :
Life buds from death : gay springs from
trist.

• • • • •
Hail, new-born Hope, sprung from the Dawn,
Grim Winter's night effacing !
Welcome, O Sun, who bank and lawn
With life and smiles art gracing !

All hail, white Snowdrop, who so bold
 Dost brave inclement weather,
 And peepest forth from the cold mould,
 The world's glad news to gather.

White as the purest drifted snow,
 Thou first of every flower
 Arisest from the soil below
 To build up Nature's bower.

And welcome, Crocus, like the sheen
 Of Summer's yellow glory ;
 Thou art an emblem too, I ween,
 To fill a poet's story.

And soft, green shoots that now burst out
 In vernal blossoms, airy,
 Blest be the one that first did sprout,—
 Less blest the one more wary !

Hail, glorious May and sweet Spring
 showers !

Welcome, ye gentle breezes !
 And welcome thrice, ye budding flowers,
 Whose cup the joy of bees is !

The mossy sward of emerald hue
 Has donned its richest colour ;
 The massy trunks of elm-trees too
 Discard attire duller.

The tender leaves and opening buds
In brightest tints are mingling ;
Refreshed by February's floods,
With new life all are tingling.

And all is bright, and all is gay,
And round us rings glad laughter ;
We revel in the golden day,
Nor reck what may come after.

Forgotten are the winter's blast
And elements unruly :
So let the past for e'er be past,—
Wake not the dead unduly !

My gentle Rose, my lovely Rose,
Is clad in soft May sunbeams :
Her eyes so bright with dazzling light
Surpass the wildest love-dreams.
And gladsome is her ringing laugh,
As on we saunter gaily,
And talk the while of Spring's bright smile,
What joys she brings us daily.

O, Spring is the season of mirth,
Of rollicking riot and fun ;
Then Summer's delights, in their birth,
Assure us that Winter is done.

And lightly rejoices the heart,
 For life is one sweet, thrilling song ;
 And Nature subdues callous Art,
 While Right puts to flight coward Wrong.

Each thought can be seen as it is,
 In the soft, yellow light of full day ;
 In Spring only live purities,
 All deceit is far banished away.

‘ Truth, truth ; lovely innocence, joy ! ’
 Is heard in the leaf-rustling breeze.
 Vanish all that is fraught with alloy !
 List, my Soul, to such whispers as these !

X

We rested at length in an airy bower,
 Green-canopied, lined with soft moss ;
 While, peeping ’twixt foliage, many a flower
 Gave its delicate head a coy toss.

The violet’s perfume was wafted abroad,
 With sweetness enthralling the soul,
 In an out-of-way place, unobtrusively stored,
 ’Neath a hedge at the foot of a knoll.

But the Rose was offended that any should vie
 More fragrance to lavish than she.
 And she sulked for a while, and cast down her
 eye,
 And spake not a fair word to me.

X Thus far: Hington Hall, Derby
 April, 1890

‘Loving better the violet’s scent
Pay your court to that sweetheart,’ she cried ;
‘Leave *me*, who am ugly and bent,
And couldn’t be sweet if I tried.’

‘Thou art sweetest of all, lovely Rose ;
The violet’s no sweetheart of mine.
No beautiful flower that blows
Can rival that fragrance of thine.’

‘Ah ! ’tis false ! And thou lovest me not :
Hast confessed that her scent does enthrall.
If thou lov’st me—go, seek on the spot
That draught that makes fairest of all :

‘That draught, that perennial boon
Of ever-unfading delight ;
That preserves to all beauty its noon,
By whose pow’r virgin-charms have no night.’

‘O Rosebud, ne’er more lovely flower
Has graced a summer garden.
What need of a still greater power ?—
My heart’s not prone to harden.

‘For, dear, thy charm is now so great,
My love could be no deeper.
Why sow more seeds of love, if Fate
Design me for the reaper ?

‘Grudge not the violet her scent ;
 Thy fragrance is far richer,
 And more thy beauty ; why intent
 In deeper shade to niche her?’

‘Thou dost not go, though I have asked !
 What worth thy adoration !
 See, now by this thy truth is tasked,
 Thus proved love’s protestation !’

Quick anger in her flashing eye
 Accents her cutting speeches.
 What but obey her hest can I,
 When dainty Rose beseeches?

‘Thy wish is my law, fairest Rosebud,’ I cry,
 ‘In search of the clear, crystal fountain,
 Where sparkles the water of beauty and life,
 I will scale the most rocky-clad mountain.

‘By the light of the first golden ray that darts
 forth
 From the orient, ruddy with dawning,
 The diamond drop that shoots highest aloft,
 All gilt by this beam of the morning,

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 117

'I will catch in the cup of the purest of flowers,
Distil it in early bee's honey,
And bear it to thee in thy brightest of bowers,
A treasure more precious than money.'

X
In the valley, the valley,
A lily, a lily,

I seek with true zest and unfaltering love.
Nowhere do I dally
On eminence hilly,
But in promising dales I incessantly rove.

Sweet lilies are many,
In fancied security ;
But none are as pure as the new-driven snow.
Oh, where are there any
Unsullied in purity,
In whose chalice the essence of beauty to
stow ?

In the valley, the valley,
A lily, a lily
I find that is pure as the new-driven snow.
Then forthwith I sally
On regions more hilly :
In search of the wondrous quintessence I go.

X Thus far: Paris May 1890
Watford June 1890

O'er hill-top and mountain
 I look for the fountain,
 Where rises the water of undying love.
 My high quest I follow
 Through thicket and hollow,
 And find it at length in the midst of a grove.

In foliage buried—
 A barrier serried—
 The magical fountain leaps high to the
 sun ;
 Then gold-flecked returning,
 All sparkling and burning,
 Its waters bear freshness wherever they run.

Till the dawn of the morrow
 No peace can I borrow,
 Though gazing on marvels so wondrous and
 rare.
 I restlessly wander,
 And lovingly ponder
 On Rose's sweet greeting, and welcoming
 air.

I watch every warning
 That tells of the morning,

THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERS 119

Till straight from the east glimmers forth one
red ray.

It hovers, then rallies,
And no longer dallies,
But gilds with its glory the fountain's top
spray.

In the lily's pure chalice—
A cup free from malice—
I catch the first drop with an unerring hand.
Resplendent in colour—
A rainbow were duller—
It sheds a soft lustre, harmonious and bland.

In a garden all sunny
I find virgin honey ;
Therewith I distil my gem's magical powers.
My soul filled with pleasure,
I bear hence my treasure,
To lay at the feet of the Queen of the Flowers.

.
Night darkly fell, and with a vague unrest
A thrill of fear passed through my expectant
breast.

Depression, vast as sudden, filled my soul ;
A sense of coming evil on me stole.
I quickened then my pace, and sought to
pass
From swampy valley to dry mountain grass.

I ween my steps had gone astray
 On that unlighted, pathless way :
 Perchance I wandered, circling round,
 Repacing still twice-trodden ground ;
 For far around stretched lowland drear,—
 And ever grew that boding fear.
 And the feeling arose that I lived through
 again,
 A nightmare of dream, 'ready seared on my
 brain.

At length through the darkness I seemed to dis-
 cern
 A phosphorous glimmer to flittingly burn
 In the sodden and desolate lea.
 And my impulse of horror redoubled in mind
 As in vain I endeavoured to leave it behind,
 Leave it dancing from tree to tree,
 For the flit-flitting phantom arose e'er in sight ;
 In whatever direction I turned on that night
 On before it seemed ever to be.

Then I knew it an omen of grief and dismay ;
 That, haunted and dogged by this treacherous
 ray,
 Deep misfortune for me was in store.
 And as Will-o'-the-Wisp re-arose in my course,
 And invited pursuit that he seemed to enforce,
 Awearied I struggled no more.

But with firmly-set teeth I advanced to the light
That flickered and danced with a ghastly delight
As ne'er it had danced before.

Then I sank to my knees in the horrible bog,
Where marsh gas was yielded from every log :

But the Will gave a hideous wink.
Still deeper I sank to a loathsome bed,
And then the mud closed over my head,
And yet I continued to sink.
Down, down, with a leech sticking close to my
brain,
And the gurgle of ooze for a funeral strain,
And a pall of slime blacker than ink.

.
God of the Morning ! Welcome thy rays !
Blest be the dawning of new summer days !
When Sun-peep puts to flight
Ill dreams and darksome night,
Filled with a pure delight,
Sing Nature's praise !

Back to your sepulchre, spectres of sleep !
Crops of an o'erwrought mind let madmen
reap !
But in the day's full glare
Nature is everywhere
Truthful and wondrous fair :
Then none should weep.

Safe in the dewy grass the Lily lies,
 Her bosom holding still the glistering prize.
 When my last force was spent
 And sleep upon me bent,
 She, on her trust intent,
 All harms defies.

‘Come now, sweet Lily friend, to Rose’s
 bower!’
 My heart is blithe and gay : yet one short
 hour
 And once again beside
 My darling, blushing bride,
 Nought shall from me divide
 My precious flower.

Hasting our onward course, we reach at last
 The happy valley, which, grim mountains
 past,
 Breathes only gladsome joy,
 Fraught with no base alloy ;
 Nought there that can destroy !
 No Winter’s blast !

Flowers, smiling, welcome me back to the
 vale ;
 Fair maids with sparkling eyes my footsteps
 hail.

But not for me their charms
Waken deep heart-alarms :
I go to Rose's arms—
Could these prevail ?

Now past her threshold gladly I leap,
When fierce, restraining hands around me
creep ;
' Ah ! gently, henchman thorn,
Who thus my flesh hast torn,
No more o'er Rose forlorn
Guard shalt thou keep !'

Thrusting aside the briar, onward I hie :
Hark ! her sweet voice I hear ! Now Rose
is nigh.
Stay ! Is day changed to night ?
What vision greets my sight ?
Whence comes the scene to blight
The Dragon-fly ?

Stooping, he sips the dew upon her lips,
Kisses her dainty brow and eyelid tips.
Curses ! Is hell unbound ?
' Out now, thou graceless hound,
Ere on the thirsty ground
Thy life-blood drips !'

Scornful he drew his sword from out its
sheath ;

Steel clashed on steel, death flashed our gaze
beneath.

Then pierced my side his brand :

Quick now my own right hand !

He falls, his full length spann'd,

Cleft through the teeth.

'On thy own head thy chastisement,' I cried,

'Cleft is the traitor tongue with which thou
lied !

Up, knave, and quick depart,

Ere to thy treach'rous heart,

Filled with all dastard art,

My blade shall glide.

'—And thou, the one I loved with all my
heart,

What worth the vows thou mad'st ere we did
part ?

How ! art thou nothing loth

To break thus thy plighted troth ?

Is thus a woman's oath ?—

Her smiles all art ?'

Rose bends her head, abashed, a moment's
space,

Then coyly turns to me a pouting face :

'Thou wast so long away ;
I thought thou meant'st to stay,
Flirting with sweethearts gay,
'Dowed with more grace.

'Thine was the fault, to leave me thus alone,
While pleasure-seeking thou afar hadst
gone.—

Hast thou thy quest fulfilled ?
Give quick the draught distilled,
Let not one drop be spilled :
That shall atone.'

Eagerly Rose extends her hand to take
The hard-won treasure — love's unhappy
stake.

Filled with up-boiling wrath,
I toss the liquid forth,
Stamp it to useless froth,
And thus I spake :

'Wanton, 'tis thus I prize thy treach'rous
kiss !

Too dear the price one pays for transient
bliss !

Not for thee, light of love,
Shall my heart quicker move :
Whose faith the test to prove?—
Love's test was this !

126 POEMS LYRICAL AND ROMANTIC

' Ah ! Fickle heart and false ! A soldier gay
With honeyed words soon won thy love
away.

Where is thy paramour ?

Let him the prize restore.

I all thy wiles abhor :

Farewell for aye !'

Ramos Mejia,
Buenos Aires
1891.



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Poems

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